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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 000169

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STATE FOR AF/FO, AF/W, AF/RSA, AF/PDPA, DRL, INR/AA  
AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE PASS TO AMEMBASSY MALABO

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [SOCI](#) [KPAO](#) [NI](#)  
SUBJECT: NIGER DELTA ACTIVISTS WELCOME U.S. ENGAGEMENT

REF: ABUJA 0163 AND PREVIOUS

CLASSIFIED BY: James P. McAnulty, Political Counselor, U.S. Embassy  
Abuja, Political Section; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

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SUMMARY  
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11. (C) Activists from civil society told Assistant Secretary for African Affairs Ambassador Johnnie Carson that they welcomed greater U.S. engagement during a round table discussion on Niger Delta in Lagos on February 6. Participants praised U.S. public statements urging a constitutional end to the leadership vacuum created by President Yar'Adua's prolonged absence and stressed that they believed greater international involvement in the Niger Delta would spur progress. All activists endorsed the Niger Delta Technical Committee's final report and urged its immediate implementation. When asked to identify the greatest impediment to a solution to the crisis, participants cited a lack of sincerity and political will on the part of the federal government. Whether Acting President Goodluck Jonathan, an ethnic Ijaw with roots in the heart of the Niger Delta, can break through the existing inertia and start to deliver on promises remains to be seen. END SUMMARY.

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DIVERSE PROBLEMS, COMMON PERSPECTIVES  
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12. (C) On February 6, seven activists met in Lagos with Ambassador Carson for a round-table discussion on the Niger Delta. Participants included Gary Akpobire of the Delta State Integrated Development Programme, Dr. Chris Ekiyor President of the Ijaw Youth Council, Eneruvie Enakoko of the Civil Liberties Organization, Sheriff Mulade of Center for Peace and Environmental Justice, Lieutenant Colonel Paul Obi of the Niger Delta Technical Committee, Allen Onyema of the Foundation for Ethnic Harmony in Nigeria, and Tony Uranta of the Commission of Nobel Laureates to the Niger Delta. Each participant provided a summary of key issues that ranged from the impact of environmental degradation on the economy of the region to the need for internationally-recognized organizations to provide nonviolence training to communities and

youth throughout the Niger Delta. Several participants addressed the issue of economic and political disenfranchisement, emphasizing the need for greater resource control at the local level and credible elections leading to accountable government.

13. (C) Participants praised recent U.S. statements on the need for a constitutional transfer of presidential power in light of President Yar'Adua's prolonged absence. They endorsed greater U.S. and international involvement in the Niger Delta peace process, with Obi saying it was the best way to keep pressure on the federal government to deliver on promises of rehabilitation and development. Onyema stressed the need for the involvement of credible international organizations to end a "self-interest driven" post-amnesty program. Mulade urged the U.S. to demand greater responsibility and respect for law on the part of the international oil companies. Uranta, Enakoko, and Onyema requested U.S. support in building the capacity of civil society in grass-roots democracy, non-violence, litigation, and election monitoring. Ekiyor added that Nigeria needed U.S. assistance in technical training, pointing to the fact that Nigeria has "no functioning refineries, no functioning hospitals."

14. (C) Participants agreed that the Niger Delta Technical Committee Report provided a workable blueprint for addressing the problems in the Niger Delta. The failure of the federal government to issue a white paper on this report and to adopt its recommendations is,

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they stated, a major factor undermining GON credibility in the Niger Delta.

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FEDERAL GOVERNMENT INSINCERE  
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15. (C) Ambassador Carson asked participants what they believed was the greatest impediment to solving the Niger Delta crisis. Uranta noted that too many vested interests benefited from the status quo, including international interests who profited from illegal oil bunkering or illegal arms sales. Akpobire said the federal government lacked sincerity in finding a permanent solution, arguing that while President Yar'Adua and the individual governors wanted a solution, because they saw peace as an accomplishment that would enhance their image and legacy, "everyone below them is only interested in themselves." Enakoko summarized the problem as a lack of "political will" on the part of the small clique of people who "have controlled Nigeria since independence."

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COMMENT  
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16. (C) As an ethnic Ijaw, Jonathan is presumed to be on the side of Niger Delta activists with respect to development, resource control, and environmental action. Viewed as a weak vice president and reluctant to take charge in Yar'Adua's absence, it remains to be seen if Jonathan as Acting President will have the clout and the will to advance the Niger Delta process. END COMMENT.

¶7. (U) Assistant Secretary Carson did not have an opportunity to clear this telegram before departing from Lagos.

¶8. (U) ConGen Lagos prepared and coordinated this telegram with Embassy Abuja, which transmitted this telegram on behalf of ConGen Lagos.  
SANDERS